

Worship Resources - *Starting Over*

<https://youtu.be/ouj9yuHCF7A>

Palm Sunday, Year B,

28th March, 2021

2 Corinthians 5:14-19 NIV / Mark 11:1-11 CEV

Prelude *Oh God, Great Womb*

played by church musician Annie Center,
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<https://youtu.be/IXP7xzqGdml>

Intro / Call to Worship

We raise our voices and wave with joyful hope the palms of deliverance of God's people. Hosanna! Hosanna to the Son of David! Our hearts are filled with expectation as we welcome the coming king. Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! We receive into the crowded streets of our lives the one who is Savior, not only of us, but of all the earth. Hosanna! Hosanna in the highest heaven!

I'm glad to welcome you to online worship this Palm Sunday, with Olympic View Community Church. We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.

As we gather today on Palm Sunday, let's embrace the jubilation found in the events of this day long ago, as we listen and maybe even sing along to the following hymn, Hosanna, Loud Hosanna!

Reflection Video *Hosanna, Loud Hosanna* (Lyric Video)

produced and posted to YouTube by ILP, used with permission

<https://youtu.be/L8VgZTC0FS0>

Invocation

Holy God, you have fed us all out of your own generous and gracious hands. From them, we have received welcome, nourishment, hope, and consolation. May these things grow in us, alongside the gift of faith, so that we may plant their seeds in the world around us.

Through the Holy Spirit, guide us in the week [days] ahead to remember our place in your great and on-going story of resurrection, redemption, and restoration through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. (light candle) Amen.

In our epistle reading this morning, we hear Paul reminding the church in Corinth of the new life and reality found in following Christ. As we listen to these words, let's reflect on the new reality we find ourselves in, as individuals, and as a congregation, and how do we find and reflect Christ in our current circumstances.

Epistle Reading (Audio)

2 Corinthians 5:14-19 NIV

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.

And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:^[a] The old has gone, the new is here!

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:

that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

<https://youtu.be/247QKSn8QTQ>

A Time of Prayer

Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a specific request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: vicarglenn@gmail.com, and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.

Joys and Concerns

This morning, let's continue to hold George and Betty DeBon in prayer as they continue to adjust to changes in their living situation at the rehab center in Edmonds, and the confusion and disorientation that can bring. May God give them the comfort, strength and healing that they need.

Let's also remember those who continue to struggle with infection with COVID19. May God's healing presence be felt in their lives.

We also take joy in the new opportunities for fellowship gradually becoming available to those who have been vaccinated, and we pray that all can soon have more of a sense of normalcy in their lives.

Let's bring these concerns and others in our lives to God together in prayer.

Pastoral Prayer

Jesus, you set your face towards Jerusalem and walked alongside those who suffer. Be our vision, that we too may walk the way of compassion and extend a hand to those we meet.

Lord, you stopped to heal the sick and tend to those broken in body, mind or spirit. Be our vision, that we too may be a source of healing to all in need of your grace.

Jesus, you said, "The first shall be last and the last first." Be our vision, that we too may work towards your realm – when the marginalized and oppressed will be raised up and know that they are indeed beloved children of the Holy.

Jesus, you took the time to pray and to be silent. Be our vision, that through our prayers, meditation and reflection we may draw closer to you and find our way on this journey of faith.

Lord, you entered Jerusalem with peace in your heart. Be our vision, that we too can live as people of peace in the face of the world's many conflicts. May we hold your vision of justice and peace ever before us

Bless us, O Blessed One, as we enter into the days ahead of us. We will need your power and presence to sustain us as we move through these difficult days together. Spirit of Love and Life, stay close. These and all the prayers of our hearts we offer in faith, Amen

In our Gospel reading today, we are reminded of Jesus' radical entrance into Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday long ago. As we hear these words from Mark, let's not only remember the jubilation of that event, but also reflect on the new reality Jesus offered, one that was a radical departure from the past glory sought by the crowds around him.

Gospel Lesson Mark 11:1-11 CEV

Jesus and his disciples reached Bethphage and Bethany near the Mount of Olives. When they were getting close to Jerusalem, Jesus sent two of them on ahead.

He told them, "Go into the next village. As soon as you enter it, you will find a young donkey that has never been ridden. Untie the donkey and bring it here.

If anyone asks why you are doing that, say, 'The Lord[a] needs it and will soon bring it back.'"

The disciples left and found the donkey tied near a door that faced the street. While they were untying it,

some of the people standing there asked, "Why are you untying the donkey?"

They told them what Jesus had said, and the people let them take it.

The disciples led the donkey to Jesus. They put some of their clothes on its back, and Jesus got on.

Many people spread clothes on the road, while others went to cut branches from the fields.[b]

In front of Jesus and behind him, people went along shouting, "Hooray![c] God bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

God bless the coming kingdom of our ancestor David. Hooray for God in heaven above!"

After Jesus had gone to Jerusalem, he went into the temple and looked around at everything. But since it was already late in the day, he went back to Bethany with the twelve disciples.

Scripture Video Mark 11:1-11 - *Jesus Enters Jerusalem*

Lectionary bible reading

<https://youtu.be/FqBGhAKq5oU>

Message – *Starting Over*

For the last 40 days, we have been exploring the biblical story of exile and how we can relate that to our own sense of being exiled today. The season of Lent represents Jesus' time of self-exile in the wilderness. And like his exiled ancestors, he returned to begin a new endeavor, his public ministry throughout Judea and Samaria.

When we encounter our own times of feeling lost and exiled, we also discover that those exile experiences can lead to a time of new beginnings for us as well. Another way to think of it is that times of isolation are often temporary.

I remember a retired pastor in a church I served in telling me that one of his favorite phrases in scripture is found more than four hundred fifty times in the Bible: "It came to pass." That can be very good news, if you're experiencing isolation. Those times come. But, they don't usually stay. They can pass. There is always the hope and possibility of a new beginning. We can always remember that if we are still alive today, that means we, in fact, have pulled through and survived the difficult times of our past, no matter how difficult they seemed at the time.

The good news of our Christian faith, however, is that struggle and isolation are never the final destination and hope is alive even in that desolate territory. Trying times generally mark the end of one phase and the beginning of a new phase of our lives.

Jesus' difficult and lonely time of testing in the Judean wilderness gave way to a new beginning—the beginning of his public ministry. It prepared him and strengthened him for it in a way that perhaps nothing else could.

New beginnings stand at the heart of the gospel message. No matter who we are or what we've done, no matter if the exile is of our own making, God is present in those struggles with us and can lead us through it and out of it. When we find ourselves in the wilderness of sin, guilt, and separation from God and from others, there is a way out of the wilderness and a new beginning. God provides that way in Christ.

The apostle Paul was an expert in new beginnings. He knew well the spiritual territory we call "the wilderness." He knew what it felt like to be exiled and excluded, because he spent a great deal of time there! Paul also knew the power of being made new and set free from the wilderness of a broken relationship with God and with others. Paul wrote, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us".

The good news of Christ is that no matter who you are or what you have done, there is always held out to you the chance for a new beginning. In Christ, we are new creations: "Everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"

Jesus journeyed through his wilderness exile and came out the other side, stronger and ready to begin his public ministry. Now we join him at the end of that ministry in our Gospel lesson today. The scene we are presented with is what appears to be his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, the heart of the Jewish world of that time. The crowds gathered and cheered him, shouting "Hosanna" which loosely translated, literally means "save us" as well as proclaiming that "blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David." We often picture this scene as something grand and exultant, and the mood was joyous. But to see Jesus as entering as a conquering ruler, is to really miss the flavor of that scene. Unlike a noble king, he was riding a young colt, not a magnificent steed. He was attended by a ragtag bunch of social nobody's, with no major force marching behind him.

Now we can contrast that scene in the east of the city with one that was occurring in the west. There the power of Rome was on full display, with Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, the face of the Emperor for Palestine, entering on a majestic steed with legions of cavalry and soldiers, banners flying, drums keeping the marching cadence as this grand military parade passed. Pilate is making a statement. This is the might and power that will crush you if you step out of line.

Passover was a tense time, a risky holiday observance for keeping the peace of Rome, the Pax Romana. After all, it was an observance of the liberation of Israel from the oppression of the Egyptians in exile. So it kind of made you think about your current situation, being yet again oppressed by the Romans, and thinking how you can free yourself again.

So Pilate wasn't in town to enjoy the festivities, he was there to ensure order, brutally if necessary. When Jesus was greeted with joyous Hosannas by the Jerusalem crowd, those people were really seeking to be saved from their own wilderness, the brutal oppression of the Romans, maintained through the Temple and ruling classes of Judea. Jesus was, in effect, stepping into a wilderness time again. A desperate time of trial and tribulation. These people were looking to him to deliver them from their own wilderness, through power and violent transition.

That's not the new beginning he had to offer, was it? Yet he wasn't just quietly riding into town without a plan either. The scripture makes it clear every choice that day was by design. The choice of a young colt, the humble way he proceeds. Any Jew present would have made the connection to the prophecy in Zechariah 9, where "your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a colt... he will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem." Those observing would expect some

cataclysmic conclusion that would wipe the threat of war from among them, that would in some fashion decimate their Roman overlords. Jesus would have known the words of Zechariah. He was not a puppet in some divinely scripted drama whose text was written from eternity.

Theologian Marcus Borg reflects that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was a staged "political demonstration" serving as an "indictment of the Temple as a center of nationalist resistance: against the Roman occupation. A "king" making his procession on such a slow and lowly beast can hardly be understood to be inspiring violent resistance.

One could even argue that this procession is a form of guerilla theater, poking fun at the Romans in the very contrasts between the procession of Jesus and that of Pilate. And it's interesting that at the end of that day, Jesus makes his way for a brief visit to the Temple, took a quick look around, and left the city for the night. Then first thing the next day, low and behold, he returns to the Temple to stage another demonstration.

One has to wonder if that too, was planned. Jesus is entering the final wilderness of his mortal life, yet at the same time he is setting the stage for a new beginning. He is bringing his message and image of a different kingdom to the very center of religious and economic power in Jerusalem. A kingdom not founded on the strength of violence and oppression. A kingdom which is the opposite of the might of Rome, or the violence of the Davidic kings.

His is a kingdom of humility, one which chooses a young donkey over a majestic stallion. One that resists evil and oppression through nonviolent action, by mocking that very power in a peaceful parade, or through the turning over of tables to make a point. The point that this wilderness is not the end of the story. There is hope on the other side. But that hope is not achieved through some apocalyptic, cataclysmic resolution, rather it is accomplished through the humble acts of a suffering servant, one who knows the wilderness well, and has been forged in the barren loneliness that the wilderness often brings.

Like those people on that first Palm Sunday, we too find ourselves struggling through tough times that we desperately seek a way out of, wildernesses of our own lives, compounded by the imposed exile of pandemic. And like those ancestors, we are seeking one who will save us, one we can shout Hosanna to. Yet do we also seek the same misguided conclusion to our suffering as they did in ages past? A savior arriving in majestic grandeur to do battle with the forces that beset us? Or is our savior still the humble man on an unassuming donkey foal? Do we seek to be part of or in collusion with the empire that oppresses or do we follow our savior's example and take actions to show what the true kingdom of God looks like? How can we follow in the footsteps of our savior, here and now, to bring the kingdom of heaven closer to fruition in this world? We have a choice. We can sit idly by and

cling to the ways of the past, much like those in the crowd of Jesus' day or we can seek to find ways to join in the work

God is already doing this all around us. We can seek the lost glory of yesteryear, or be willing to humbly embrace our new reality, and seek ways that we can be the body of Christ, just as we are.

But the good news of our faith is that the wilderness of exile never has the last word. We know the wilderness Jesus was entering, we know how that story ends. When Jesus was on the cross, he was in the darkest wilderness of his life. Jesus was nailed to that cross to die as a criminal, as the example of the justice that this world has to offer. As Jesus hung there, the life draining from him, he experienced the rejection, the anguish, and the exile of the darkest wilderness. Jesus cried out, quoting Psalm 22, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" But, we know that the cross was not the end. We, who will walk the wilderness way of exile with Christ through this Holy Week, know what we celebrate next Sunday. We know that death will never have the final word, that the wilderness ways of the powers and conditions of this world are not the end of the story. We know that the wilderness "comes to pass."

We have the opportunity to take advantage of the new beginning that Jesus models and offers to us. I pray that we choose to live into that new reality of hope in Christ, as his body, and seek the new reality God has in store for us, whatever that may look like. Amen.

Call to Serve.

As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's shalom around us. Today, as we listen to the following song played by Annie, let's reflect on what new reality we are being called to as Christ's body in this world, and how we can find ways to reflect that hope in our new reality.

A Time for Reflection

Reflection on the Word [Video]

<https://youtu.be/Wfq3KHm5xNo>

This is My Father's World

music by Franklin Sheppard,
played by Annie Center

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

O Holy One,
Bless these gifts
So that the world may know your love
Even when we are silent. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

“Prepare the way of the Lord!” God is doing something new, right now, in our world and in our lives. Can you not perceive it? God has made a highway in the desert, rivers in the wilderness, and God is making a way forward for us. You are loved. You are forgiven. You are God’s beloved child. Listen in your heart for what God is speaking to you. Rest, and prepare, for God is leading us on, and we are all on the journey together. Get ready, join your hearts with one another, and go with the grace and peace of Christ. Amen.

As we extinguish this candle, carry its divine spark into your lives this week, sharing God's love and light with all you encounter. Amen.

Postlude

God of Grace and God of Glory,

music by John Hughes,
played by Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/UsfnvbBj2DQ>